



Eco-Congregation Scotland Local Networks Seminar Saturday 7th September 2013



This Seminar is organised to provide networks to create an opportunity for networking between the networks, to provide them with ideas for action and for them to give feedback to ECS. This year 14 of our 17 networks were represented on the day (for a full list of participants, please see Appendix 1). Highland and Moray and Orkney networks were unable to attend due to the distances involved in travelling to a meeting in the Central Belt and the Fife network representative had to call off at the last minute due to ill health.

The meeting opened with a welcome and prayer led by the Rev Trevor Jamison, Environmental Chaplain to Eco-Congregation Scotland.

1. Ways of Understanding the Human Role in Creation: Rev Trevor Jamison

Trevor illustrated four models of understanding the human role in creation, with volunteers reading the relevant Bible passages, and used these to open up a discussion as to which model best represented our view of our role in creation:

I. Dominion: Gen 1: 26-28

Our intelligence and the power which that brings gives us responsibility for creation but that does not mean we should dominate. Collectively we have dominion or power but as individuals we should exercise responsibility (Israelite kings were given dominion, but were expected to use it to serve the people).

II. Stewardship: Gen 2: 15

Stewards have authority and exercise power but they do this on behalf of another. There is a need to steward wisely not only on behalf of other people but also on behalf of other creatures and future generations.

However, there is a “tragedy of the commons”: the fact that resources such as the air and the seas are not “owned” by anyone and can be exploited and degraded for economic gain and self-interest. There is therefore an over-riding need to hold political leaders to account, for them to be good stewards on our behalf and so overcome social, economic and environmental injustice. To support this there also needs to be accountability at all levels of society, “politicians need us and we need them”.

III. Priests of Creation: Ps 148

Humanity is part of creation but has a special role within it, enabling it to be as God intends ie to be in praise of God. Humans are a model of God’s appearance in creation, something that is strongly reflected in Celtic Christianity.

If this model is followed, does it mean that God is not already in creation and it raises the question, does creation need an intermediary (humans) in order to praise God? However, this model encourages a move towards greater responsibility, the idea of giving something up for God, self-sacrifice and self-denial.

IV. Community of Creation: Ps 98

People, the living and non-living world are part of a community of praise. This is perhaps a base to start from and the most hopeful concept. Everything that is taken away or degraded is a diminution of the community of creation. Human needs do not take precedence and there is interdependence within the whole community of creation and intradependence with future generations. This model encourages us to look outwards and to look ahead but do we accept that being part of the community of creation means that everything in the created world has equal value in God's eyes?

Where does the Church sit on the spectrum represented by these models and how do we relate to them?

If a main focus for the Church is on the well-being of humanity, then the link should be made that our well-being is dependent on the health and well-being of the environment.

2. Swap Shops 1 and 2

A lot of fascinating information was shared in these sessions about network and individual church achievements. Ideas for network activities included:

Spiritual

- Having a "pot luck" worship evening, where everyone brings a favourite prayer, hymn / song or reading to share.
- Encouraging people to write their own green hymns and prayers.
- Learning from a local eco-congregation that had introduced caring for creation ideas and action to their church via their children's and youth organisations.



Practical

- Energy: visits to churches that have installed renewable energy, such as: solar panels at Saughtonhall URC (see http://www.saughtonhall.com/solar_energy.html), wind turbines and a ground source heat pump at Bankfoot, (see <http://www.bankfootchurch.org.uk/ourstory.html>) and also at Bridge of Allan Parish Church (<http://www.bridgeofallanparishchurch.org.uk/>). Biomass boiler at Gifford Parish Church.
- 'Earth be Glad' project - measuring the average carbon emissions of the congregation in our homes and transport.
- Showing films on the topic eg "The Power of Community" (see <http://www.powerofcommunity.org/>).
- Waste and recycling ideas:
 - Participation in the Zero Waste Zones pilot, part of the Scottish Government's Zero Waste Plan 2011-15 see http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/ZWS_Programme_Plan_2011-15.pdf.
 - negotiating with a local recycling company for free food waste uplift for churches. NB Food businesses (except in rural areas) which produce over 50 kg of food waste per week have to present that food waste for separate collection from 1 January 2014. (see www.sepa.org.uk/waste/moving_towards_zero_waste/zero_waste_regulations.aspx).
 - recycling of first aid kits from oil rigs.
 - recycling plastic tops and batteries via churches.
 - hosting a "swishing" event, see http://swishing.com/about_swishing/.

- a repair cafe.
- Biodiversity talks from
 - Anthony McClusky (anthony.mccluskey@bumblebeeconservation.org) of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.
 - Dr Bruce Ball of Scottish Rural College, on 'Soil, Soul and Sustenance' bruce.ball@sruc.ac.uk.

Community

- Many networks organise or take part in regular beach cleans or litter picks, inviting other congregations and the community to join in.
- Further outreach to the local community has been achieved by holding eco-coffee mornings and by working with local eco schools.
- Interest has also been expressed in promoting eco funerals and green burials.

Network organisation and meetings are evolving to meet the different needs and growth of the movement. We welcomed a representative of East Lothian network, at that time our newest network, although since the seminar Moray network have had their inaugural meeting! Network programmes are increasingly being organised by small groups of (mainly award winning) churches, so spreading the load of hosting and administration. Different venues and formats are being tried, moving away from just doing talks to visits, walks (with some individual congregations also opening up their own walks programme to other eco-congregations in the area) and joint worship. Some congregations have their own eco or green newsletters and are making them available on their websites – see <http://old-and-abbey-church.org.uk/eco-news/> and others have invited their local politicians to discuss environmental issues with them.

3. Members' Topics

In advance of the seminar network members had been invited to suggest topics for discussion at the Seminar. Three topics were put forward:

I. **Plastics:** Sarah Tolley

Plastic waste can now be found everywhere, from remote mountain tops, beaches and oceans to most streets in our towns and cities. Plastic carrier bags are one of the most ubiquitous forms of waste and litter, being easily carried by both wind and water. See Appendix 2 for further information about plastic waste and recycling.

Measures to discourage the use of free plastic bags are already in place in Northern Ireland and other European countries. Scotland is due to introduce a 5p levy on plastic bags from October 2014. This charge is not a tax but will see retailers donating the proceeds to charity - this could be up to £5m per year after retailers have covered their costs. However, the legislation proposed for Scotland is limited to "single life" plastic bags, which are currently given away in supermarkets and other retail outlets.

It has been shown that these "single life" bags are reused, on average, five times before going to landfill or being otherwise disposed of. However, the so called "bags for life", which stores charge for but engage to replace free of charge, are, on average, only used seven times, before disposal. The plastic in these bags for life is thicker and they are therefore more environmentally damaging than single life bags. The case can be made that the use of both types of bag should be discouraged or even banned completely. In the meantime, it should be mandatory for every plastic bag to indicate clearly the type of recycling it is suitable for. That's because consumers should be able to choose the kinds of plastic bag can be recycled or composted over those that cannot.

Eco-Congregations and the networks have the potential to lobby politicians on this type of legislation and by so doing change and improve them.

For the Scottish government's findings about the carrier bag charges, see:

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/07/7590/13

The legal basis for the regulations is section 88 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12/section/88>. The announcement says "The charge will apply to single use bags of any material, not just plastic".

II. Target 400: Gordon Hudson (topic originally suggested by Bill Craigie, who was unable to attend the Seminar)

In February 2012 the ECS Board agreed the following targets. These were subsequently agreed with the Scottish Government in return for continued funding:

- March 31st 2014 - 350 congregations
- March 31st 2015 - 400 congregations

We currently have 297 registered congregations, which means we need to recruit 103 congregations in 18 months or 5.7 per month. Currently we are recruiting at a rate of 1.5 per month. To keep on target for this year we need to recruit 7 per month till the end of March. This is very unlikely to happen.

We are very reliant on congregations and local networks doing this as we have no direct routes of communication with local congregations.

Reasons why churches don't sign up

There are many, but here are the main ones in declining order:

- They don't think they have done enough to register - confusing registration with the award. This is partly our fault for publicising award holders so much.
- Individuals in congregation interested but they can't get approval from decision makers.
- Theological - some churches don't see the environment as being an important issue.
- We haven't asked the right person in the congregation (sometimes hard to identify who that would be).



What is Eco-Congregation Scotland doing to increase recruitment?

- I. We have been establishing a regular background level of PR coverage about Eco-Congregation Scotland in the Christian media in Scotland so that we are not coming in cold when trying to recruit congregations.
- II. The registration procedure has been made easier and completing the Churches' Check Up is no longer required.
- III. A new communications strategy is being developed and will be put to the Board at their October meeting. This will include improving the web site, to make it more modern and accessible, give networks the ability to update and maintain their own page, improve performance in search

engines when people are looking for information on the issues we are writing about and make greater use of social media.

IV. Consideration is also being given to running campaigns on environmental issues that congregations can get involved in.

What can networks do?

- Identify local congregations with environmental interests who are not registered and get them to sign up.
- Use personal contacts to invite congregations to join.
- Speak at local diocese or presbytery meetings or use those channels to make direct contact with people.
- Start with the church next door (neighbouring parish or church of another denomination).
- Printing out and handing people registration forms along with the leaflet may be more effective than just asking. We can supply these from the office on request.

Other ideas

We could do the following if we had more resources:

- I. Write to 2,000 of the 3,700 unregistered congregations in Scotland inviting them to register. A 1% response would recruit 20 churches, 3% would be 60. The cost of doing this would be about £2,000.
- II. The risk is that it would cut across local relationships and it may use up opportunities which would be more successful by using local contacts.
- III. Advertise in denominational magazines and other church media outlets.
- IV. Produce video material and distribute it.

Discussion

- Everyone was urged to use their own personal networks and contacts with sympathetic individuals in neighbouring congregations, as word of mouth is the most effective way of encouraging new recruits.
- Try to find a young person to manage a Facebook page on our behalf and make the link the environment for children who are at both school and church.
- Prepare a standard article promoting ECS, which could be used in all church magazines and make it available as widely as possible, through individual, congregational and denominational contacts.
- Many churches are in vacancy and this could be seen as a barrier to involvement but, where mergers are planned between a congregation already registered and one that is not, it could be an opportunity.
- It is important to get the support of the clergy but it is the Green Team that “does”, preferably with the active support of the minister, priest or pastor.

III. Lifestyle Choices: Angela Campbell

It is acknowledged that, in many cases, the possibilities of reducing an individual church’s carbon footprint is limited by the design of the buildings and finance. Therefore in order to make a difference carbon reduction measures need to be taken on by members of the congregation / parishioners in their own homes.

Indeed, action at home has a bigger potential for reducing a congregation / parish’s total carbon footprint than by taking action only in the church and has the added bonus of saving money. Although there may be many opportunities for households to reduce their carbon emissions, it is hard to monitor the actions and measure their impact for the congregation or parish as a whole.

A list of resources to can be found in Appendix 3

EVALUATION

We received fourteen completed evaluation forms. There were six questions in all. Respondents overwhelmingly found the seminar to be useful and gave a range of interesting suggestions on how to make improvements and helpful ideas for next year's seminar. We wish to thank everyone who took the time to complete the evaluation form. The questions with an overview of responses are listed below.

1. How useful do you feel the seminar was in term of giving a.) inspiration and motivation, b.) clear information about the changes at Eco-Congregation, c.) ideas for action in your network and d.) clear information about Eco-Congregation?

By far the majority of respondents found the seminar useful or very useful in providing:

- inspiration, motivation
- ideas for action in their networks

with only one person finding the Seminar of little use in providing clear information about Eco-Congregation.

2. Which aspect of the seminar did you find most useful?

The aspect of the seminar respondents found most useful varied. Six respondents highlighted the "Understanding the Human Role in Creation" session as most useful, although one of those commented that it was fascinating but perhaps not useful – certainly giving "food for thought". Six respondents also highlighted the Swap Shop and another two identified meeting others and hearing their ideas.

3. Which aspect of the seminar did you find the least useful?

Nine respondents either didn't comment on this question or replied "none". One respondent thought that there was not enough information about networks and eco-congregations and their interface with the Church of Scotland hierarchy. One respondent found some members' topics too specific and thought the Swap Shop sessions could have been expanded to cover this and one found the "Understanding the Human Role in Creation" session interesting but too long. Another respondent thought that the time restrictions on day meant that we had to keep moving on to fit in with the timings on the agenda and we should either have reduced topics or increased the time available

4. How do you intend to follow up on the seminar with your network?

Responses varied from:

Approaching other local churches and using some of the ideas generated. Taking back suggestions to networks for working together more, re-energising the network, scheduling activities in line with the seasons, reading and following up on written resources (Ideas for Action - see <http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/materials/>) were all mentioned.

More specifically other respondents mentioned passing on information about the four models suggested in the "Understanding the Human Role in Creation" and action on some of the topics raised, including plastics bags and eco funerals. One respondent was new to their network and was waiting to meet them and another wanted to look at getting some kind of theological

qualification in Christian environmental ethics. One person also commented on the difficulty of following up with fellow network members when not all share contact details

5. Do you have any suggestions about topics for discussion at the next year's Local Network Seminar?

Seven people either had no suggestions or wanted more time to consult with their network or think, pray or meditate about this.

Other suggestions from individual respondents included:

- Public engagement on environmental issues
- Carbon accounting and data collection and reporting to inform action and discussion
- Wind farm technology updates, pros and cons and viable alternatives
- Less talk of meetings and more of practical stuff
- Exchange of choirs and a competition for new hymns [on an environmental theme]

6. Other comments / suggestions or requests for further information

- An interesting useful and informative day
- The informality of the meeting made it most useful as everyone could contribute easily

Where do we go from here - things to think about for 2014:

- The possibility of networks engaging with politicians on environmental issues. This has already been achieved in network areas such as Angus and Dundee and Esk and Tweed. Further information and advice is available from the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office (SCPO) website at: <http://www.actsparl.org/media/144590/making%20a%20difference%20-%20scpo%20-%20jan13.pdf>
- The need for some sort of resource to help eco-groups to interact more effectively with other types of church groups e.g. fairtrade, justice & peace, choir / praise groups, lunch clubs, junior church, children and young people's groups, church magazine etc.
- Eco-funerals was a topic that stimulated discussion and deep feelings – is there something here about green funerals in general and the availability of church grounds for such as an area where we could do some work?
- Beach cleans or litter picks in rural or urban areas were promoted and/or supported by many networks. Could this be made a more focussed activity with the provision of some prayers for use before, after or during these activities?



Appendix 1

List of Participants

Name	Network
Karen McCrossan and Vicky Mitchell	Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire
Alex Robertson and Fay Forge	Angus and Dundee
Barbara Richerby	East Lothian
Angela Campbell and Sarah Tolley	Edinburgh
Diana Brown	Esk and Tweed
Kate and Sean McKay	Dumfries and Galloway
Robin Green	Glasgow
Elizabeth Lambert and Selina McGeoch	Helensburgh and Lomond
Jean Hodgson and Anne Watson	Mid Argyll
Ann Gregory	North Ayrshire
Gillian Libby	Perth
John Redshaw	South Lanarkshire
Sarah Young	West Lothian and Falkirk
Kathrine Gardner	Stirling
Philippa Bonella	ECS
Gordon Hudson	“
Trevor Jamison	“
Margaret Warnock	“
Apologies	
Alan Werritty	Fife Network

APPENDIX 2

PLASTICS RECYCLING

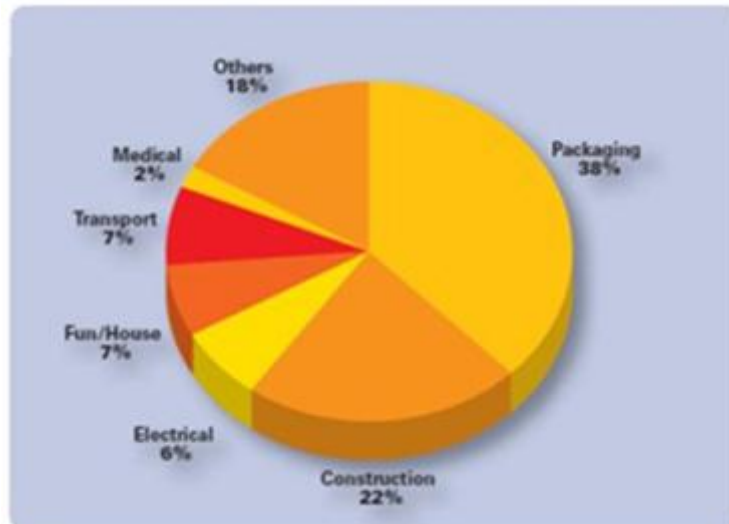
The UK uses over 5 million tonnes of plastic each year of which an estimated 24% is currently being recovered or recycled. It's important to recycle plastics and reduce your consumption – as most types take hundreds of years to break down naturally if they're sent to landfill sites.

Nearly all types of plastics can be recycled, however the extent to which they are recycled depends upon technical, economic and logistic factors. As a valuable and finite resource, the optimum recovery route for most plastic items at the 'end-of-life' is to be recycled, preferably back into a product that can then be recycled again and again and so on.

The vast majority of UK councils now offer householders some form of plastics recycling as part of the local authority waste collection system and this is generating increasing annual tonnages of post-consumer plastics packaging waste as the input of raw material to the recycling sector. Across the construction, manufacturing and retail sectors the importance of capturing potentially valuable streams of waste plastics and channelling them into efficient recycling and recovery processing routes is now recognised as a key way to save costs and reduce environmental impacts of organisations.

In the past few years the UK has seen rapid growth in the volumes of plastics collected and separated for recycling across both the public and private sector. These newly available tonnages of waste plastics present the industry with the challenge of how best to convert a waste resource into valuable new materials and products.

Plastics Consumption in the UK by Application in 2010



Source: BPF

Challenges

There are about 50 different types of plastics, with hundreds of different varieties. All types of plastic are recyclable but some councils collect just a few of the most common and more valuable. Compared with other materials, such as [glass](#) and [metal](#), plastic polymers require greater processing (heat treating, thermal [depolymerization](#) and monomer recycling) to be recycled. Heating alone is not enough to dissolve such large molecules, so plastics must often be of nearly identical composition to mix efficiently.

When different types of plastics are melted together, they tend to [phase-separate](#), like oil and water, and set in these layers. The [phase boundaries](#) cause structural weakness in the resulting material, meaning that [polymer blends](#) are useful in only limited applications.

Another barrier to recycling is the widespread use of [dyes](#), [fillers](#), and other additives in plastics. The polymer is generally too [viscous](#) to economically remove fillers, and would be damaged by many of the processes that could cheaply remove the added dyes. Additives are less widely used in beverage containers and [plastic bags](#), allowing them to be recycled more often.

In cases where plastic products are particularly lightweight and contaminated with other materials, the energy and resources used in a recycling process may be more than those required producing new plastics. In such cases recycling is not the most environmentally sound option. Where recycling is not environmentally or economically justifiable, energy recovery is preferred as the high calorific value of the plastics can be used to generate energy for district heating and power.

Useful websites:



<http://www.recoup.org/business/default.asp>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plastic_recycling

http://www.bpf.co.uk/sustainability/plastics_recycling.aspx

<http://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/content/what-does-zero-waste-mean>

D. Telegraph 6.9.13 "PAYING FOR PLASTIC BAGS" Letter.

In 1970s milk was delivered in glass bottles on an electric milk float. We rinsed them & the milkman picked them up next day. Beer & lemonade was generally in glass bottles. Fruit & veg were sold in paper bags as were bread & cakes from bakeries. Meat & fish were in waxed paper. At the supermarket we packed our groceries in the same cardboard boxes in which the supermarket had received its deliveries. Without any legislation we were quite green. Now retailers oblige us to buy an apple in a polystyrene tray wrapped in clingfilm, & supermarkets deny me a cardboard box to put my groceries in. It is not "society" that has become less green. The retailers have forced these changes on us.

James Preston, Suffolk.

APPENDIX 3

Personal Lifestyle Resources

1. Eco-Congregation Scotland - Ideas for Action



10 Lifestyle Issues

<http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Lifestyle-Issues.pdf>

and

13 Climate Change: Managing Your Carbon Footprint: Pages 10-13

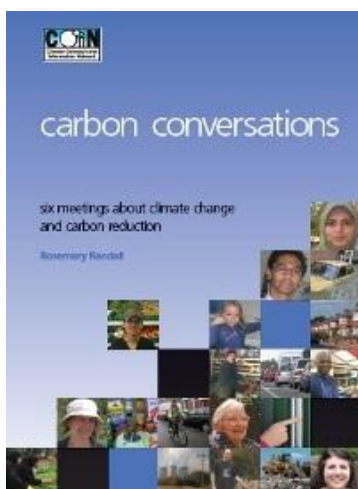
<http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Managing-Your-Carbon-Footprint.pdf>

2. L is for Lifestyle argues that our Christian faith should affect how we treat our planet just as much as it influences how we spend our money or treat our neighbours. But there are so many problems with our world that it's tempting to think that there's little hope of making a difference.

The book and website (<http://www.lisforlifestyle.com/>) try to help you discover the small changes that each of us can be making to the way we live that will have a real impact on the world. Each letter is a chapter heading in the book and the website gives follow-on information.

3. Carbon Conversations: Is the future worth a conversation?

What is Carbon Conversations?



Carbon Conversations has been selected by the Guardian as 'one of the 20 most promising solutions to Climate Change'. The course is being used by a growing number of communities and businesses all over the UK to discuss how climate change and environmental issues will affect us and how we can build a better future together.

Carbon Conversations Groups offer a supportive group experience that helps people halve their personal carbon footprint. They deal with the difficulties of change by connecting to values, emotions and identity. The groups are based on a psychological understanding of how people change.

Groups of 6-8 members meet with trained facilitators in homes, community centres, workplaces or other venues. The 6 meetings create a non-judgmental atmosphere where people are encouraged to make serious lifestyle changes. The groups offer:

- space for people to explore what climate change means for themselves, their families and their aspirations
- permission to share their hopes, doubts and anxieties
- time to work through the conflicts between intention, social pressure and identity
- reliable, well-researched information and practical guidance on what will make a difference
- support in creating a personal plan for change

The meetings use professionally designed, reliable materials to cover climate change basics, ideas for a low-carbon future and the four key areas of the footprint – home energy, travel, food and other consumption. Discussions of practicalities are woven together with discussions of how people feel and what these changes mean personally. Carbon reductions of 1 tonne CO₂ are typically made by each member during the course, with plans developed to halve individual footprints over a 4-5 year period.

Basic facilitation training equips suitable volunteers to facilitate effective, stimulating groups. Carbon Conversations groups operate well as a cascade scheme. Typically 10% of participants [train](#) to become facilitators of further groups. Carbon Conversations can complement other carbon-reduction initiatives and community projects.

See <http://carbonconversations.org/>

4. Earth Be Glad Project

St John's, Princes Street, Edinburgh



A specific *Earth be Glad* project was funded by the Scottish Climate Challenge Fund to measure and reduce the carbon emissions of the congregation.

Acting together

Sometimes environmentalists make us compare our lifestyles to each other and make us feel guilty or hypocritical - an ecology of judgment. But this initiative was about acting prophetically together as a Christian community to 'let the earth be glad' – an ecology of grace.

How did Earth be Glad work?

Earth be Glad involved measuring the average carbon emissions of the congregation in our homes and transport. By measuring the average, every individual act of insulating a window, filling the kettle carefully, leaving the car at home, even getting a solar panel, contributed to reducing it. It didn't matter if, individually, one person used more or less for whatever reason. The aim of the project was, together, to work towards the Scottish climate change targets of a 42% reduction by 2020 and an 80% reduction by 2050.

The project has now run its course and was instrumental in raising congregational awareness of the way we live as partners within creation - and not masters of it. We have a quantity of promotional literature that we developed as part of this project and will be happy to share them with other congregations who wish to engage in similar work. To get in touch: Email: office@stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk Telephone: 0131 229 7565

See <http://www.stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk/mission/environment.html>

5. Carbon Rationing Actions Groups (CRAGs) are a network of local grassroots groups dedicated to reducing their own carbon footprints and those of their communities. They set themselves carbon allowances which they reduce year-on-year. Then, over an annual cycle, groups usually reward or penalise members that undershoot or exceed their allowance – putting excess funds into low carbon projects or offsets.

Further information at: <http://www.communitypathways.org.uk/approach/439/full>

6. CHRISTIAN ECOLOGY LINK's EcoCell is a toolkit to help you to live a simpler, more Christian lifestyle. It is designed to be used by house groups, small communities or just simply groups of households. There are no hard and fast rules. Although we recommend that you study all the modules in the order listed, each module is complete in itself and can be studied in any order. You can study as many modules as you wish. It can also be studied by individuals working on their own, although the full benefit comes from being able to discuss ideas within a group setting.

See <http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/ecocell/ecocell-1>

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